



Oxford Diocesan Guild
of Church Bell Ringers
South Oxfordshire Branch



Branch Newsletter

February 2026

St Mary Magdalene, Shabbington (6)

St Mary Magdalene Church, Shabbington is the historic parish church of Shabbington and has served the village community for many centuries. The earliest parts of the present building date from the 12th century, with surviving Norman features visible in the nave. These early elements reflect the simple, solid construction typical of rural churches of that period, built shortly after the Norman Conquest reshaped England's ecclesiastical landscape.

During the 13th and 14th centuries, the church was enlarged and modified in the Gothic style. The chancel was rebuilt and windows were inserted or replaced to bring more light into the interior, following broader architectural developments seen across Buckinghamshire at the time.

The tower dates largely from the later medieval period, probably the 15th century, when many English churches were enhanced with more substantial western towers. After the Reformation in the 16th century, the church transitioned from Catholic to Anglican worship, with changes to its fittings and liturgical use reflecting the religious shifts of Tudor England.

In the 19th century, the church underwent Victorian restoration, which included structural repairs to the tower and nave, replacement or repair of roof timbers, and refurbishment of windows and stonework. The work aimed to stabilize the building and maintain its medieval fabric, without major alterations to the historic layout or the bell installations.

The tower houses a ring of six bells. Five of these were cast in 1718 by Abraham I Rudhall of Gloucester. The treble bell was added in 1881 by Mears & Stainbank of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, which also cast the Sanctus bell in 1794. The bell frame originates from 17th century. The bells were restored, retuned and rehung in 2005.

Bell	Date	Founder	Note	Weight (cwt-qtrs-lbs)
Treble	1881	Mears & Stainbank	G#	3-0-15
2	1718	Abraham Rudhall I	F#	3-2-3
3	1718	Abraham Rudhall I	E	3-2-27
4	1718	Abraham Rudhall I	D#	3-3-10
5	1718	Abraham Rudhall I	C#	4-3-3
Tenor	1718	Abraham Rudhall I	B	5-3-22

South Oxon Branch of the Oxford Diocesan Guild

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 28th February 2026

St. Mary Magdalene, Shabbington

Ringling at 3:00 pm will be followed by the service at 4:00 pm.

Refreshments will be served after the service.

The AGM will not commence before 5.00 pm.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Approval of the Minutes of the AGM held 22nd February 2025 AGM and EGMs held on 23rd August 2025 and 25th October 2025
3. Matters arising from the Minutes
4. Treasurer's Report and approval of accounts
5. Donations
6. Secretary's Report
7. 100 Club report
8. Branch Representatives' Report
9. Ringing Master's Report
10. Election of Officers:
 - a) Chairman
 - b) Vice Chairman
 - c) Secretary
 - d) Treasurer
 - e) Ringing Master
 - f) Deputy Ringing Master
 - g) Branch Representative
 - h) Branch Representative
 - i) Newsletter Editor
 - j) 100 Club
 - k) Webmaster
 - l) Independent Examiner
11. Election of New Members and presentation of certificates
12. Lesley Belcher – ODG Comms Officer
13. Any Other Business
14. Date of next AGM – Saturday 27th February 2027

Secretary's Report

Jane Willis

The 2025 AGM took place at St Helen's Church, Benson. Twenty-six members representing eleven towers were joined by Guild Master Katie Lane and Guild Steward Patricia Newton. Two long-standing Branch Officers retired at the meeting. Thanks were expressed to John Tchighianoff for his 20 years plus service as Chairman, and to Kay Bartholomew for her work as Treasurer (10 years in the current stint, plus a previous spell of 5 or 6 years as combined Secretary/Treasurer). Andrew Davis was elected Chairman, and Cathy Hughes-D'Aeth Treasurer. Kay agreed to serve for 1 year as Vice-Chairman. Japh Slaney volunteered to take on the role of Deputy Ringing Master. All other officers stayed in place. Ten new members were elected to the guild, and four previous members were re-elected.

The new membership system, Membermojo went live during the year. This has involved a lot of work by the Guild – and the secretary and Tower Captains in coaxing their members to sign up! Hopefully this will save time on administration in the long term.

2026 saw another full programme of monthly Branch Practices, all well attended, tower twinning sessions, and dedicated Eight Bell Practices. We extend our thanks to friends from outside the Branch who regularly offer a helping hand at sessions.

Sadly, the ringers at Great Milton have disbanded after decades of service – but the bells still ring out for eight bell practices, and monthly family services. Thank you to local and visiting ringers for not allowing them to fall silent. On a positive note, ringing at Tetsworth has recommenced after a gap of many years. A major clean-up took place in November, and a celebratory ring followed, along with ringing for a Christmas service. Monthly practices will recommence in February.

A major event in the year was hosting the Guild AGM at Warborough. Open ringing was available at Watlington, on their newly refurbished bells, which proved a great attraction for visiting ringers, ringing at Warborough prior to the AGM and a mobile belfry which was available throughout the day. A great deal of work went on in the background – thank you to Branch members who were involved.

Sadly, the deaths of two former branch members were recorded in the year – Alan Isherwood, formerly Dorchester Tower, and Ian Melton, formerly Great Milton Tower.

A look back at 25 Years Ago

26 members attended the AGM which had taken place at Benson. In the "old days" there was ringing both before and after the meeting, with later ringing taking place in Chalgrove.

Ringing for the Millenium had taken place in every tower. Special thanks were recorded to those who had trained new ringers in the Millenium Recruitment push. Eight ringers from different towers came together to represent the Branch in the 8 Bell Striking Competition – their ringing was a credit to the Branch.

An outing took place to Salisbury – it was noted that the coach only got stuck once during the day - on a humpback bridge! Under AOB, it was recorded that plans were underway to set up a website for the branch. Careful attention was paid to GDPR requirements, with the secretary asked to send out seek permission to include personal information for Tower Captains/Correspondents and other Branch Officers.

Distinguished Membership

Should you wish to nominate a branch member for Distinguished Membership please contact Jane Willis. This award is given to a member of at least 30 years who is considered to have given meritorious service to the Guild or Branch. Details can be found here:

http://odg.org.uk/main/pdf/dm_nomination_form_2014.pdf

Ringling Master's Report

John Hughes-D'Aeth and Japhiah Slaney

The core programme of Branch ringing in 2025 has again comprised regular practices on the fourth Saturday of each month, plus 8 bell practices which have generally alternated between the second Friday and Saturday. The Friday practices have been held at Great Milton, which has ensured that the bells continue to be rung regularly in the absence of a local band. Unless members indicate otherwise, we intend to continue with this pattern in 2026. Our thanks to the local incumbents and Tower Correspondents for making their bells available, meeting us when we arrive and making us feel welcome.

Attendance at practices has been variable. Some have been pretty busy, others frankly rather thin. The repertoire at Branch practices has ranged from rounds and call changes to simple Surprise, and at the 8 bell practices from Plain Bob Major and Grandsire Triples to Bristol and Superlative S Major.

We have been pleased to welcome some regular visitors from (just) outside the Branch, especially at the 8 bell practices. They have helped to swell our numbers and to keep the sessions viable and lively. However, the practices are primarily intended to benefit Branch members and it would be good to see more of you there. "The more the merrier" really is true. We appreciate that people have many other calls on their time, but would encourage you please to note the dates in your diary and join us when you can. Also, if you have any specific training needs – either as an individual or for your tower – or would just like the chance to try something with a stronger band, do please ask; the Branch may well be able to help.

Tower Twinning is proving popular, giving bands the chance to ring at another tower's practice within the Branch, and vice versa. This is scheduled, tower for tower, 3 times a year. From the ringer's perspective, it is another opportunity to explore different towers, ring with other bands and perhaps try something new. But the emphasis is on a fun experience, with a good dash of discovery. There are presently 8 towers doing the rounds, so there is plenty of "discovery" to be had! The past year has seen us welcome Watlington and Marsh Baldon. It is great to have so many, but there is always room for more. If your tower fancies giving it a go, please get in touch.

100 Club Report

John Tchighianoff

We had 68 subscriptions to the 100 Club which is similar to the previous year (69). The figures are as follows:

Receipts	£	Payments	£
Subscriptions	680.00	First prizes: £15 (Jan - Nov)	165.00
		Second prizes: £11 (Jan – Nov)	121.00
		December prizes (1 st : £24, 2 nd : £20, 3 rd : £10)	54.00
		Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund	340.00
	680.00		680.00

Prize winners in the year were:

2025	First prize	Second prize	Third prize	Prize money (£)
January	Mark Hunter	Wendy Simon	-	25.00
February	Anita Clayton	Chris Ward	-	26.00
March	Kay Tuckwell	Maureen Bosley	-	26.00
April	Stephen Hoar	Andrew Davis	-	26.00
May	Chris Webb	Wendy Simon	-	26.00
June	Patricia Newton	Sue Gibbins	-	26.00
July	Stephen Hoar	Anita Clayton	-	26.00
August	C and J Mason	Kate Allen	-	26.00
September	Donna Convery	Wendy Simon	-	26.00
October	Julian Sears	Annette Cooke	-	26.00
November	Paul Smith	Jo Dinnage	-	26.00
December	Gordon Smith	Christopher Rogers	Maureen Bosley	54.00
Total				340.00

Branch Representatives' Report

Amy Herlihy and Japhiah Slaney

There has been change afoot in the Guild. 2025 has been a year of preparation in attempting to restructure. Some posts have changed and of course the general day to day continues. Moving from church to meeting hall at the November GCM saw members walking under the great cedar trees of Kidlington Park. A poignant reflection of things that have seen many a year come and go. Perhaps a help to the committee in deciding the years ahead for the ODG.

Guild Restructure

The Guild was formed in 1881 and from the off had its governance vested in a committee consisting of the President (Bishop), Vice Presidents (Arch Deacons), Master, Secretary/Treasurer, Branch Representatives, 6 Honorary Members, and 6 Ringing Members. The quorum was only 5 vs our current 20. Over time this has expanded and the General Committee now has more than 50 members. It is suggested that this modus operandi is too cumbersome and slow and that a different approach is needed.

There is a proposal, whereby instead of everyone deciding everything, as in fig.1, there should be a small vanguard of members calling the shots with the remainder observing and flagging up concerns as necessary, as in fig.2.

The nuclear option of calling an EGM remains in place. If it is felt that the actions of the Guild are getting out of hand the Executive, Scrutiny Committee, any 25 members, President, Master, or Secretary may call one.

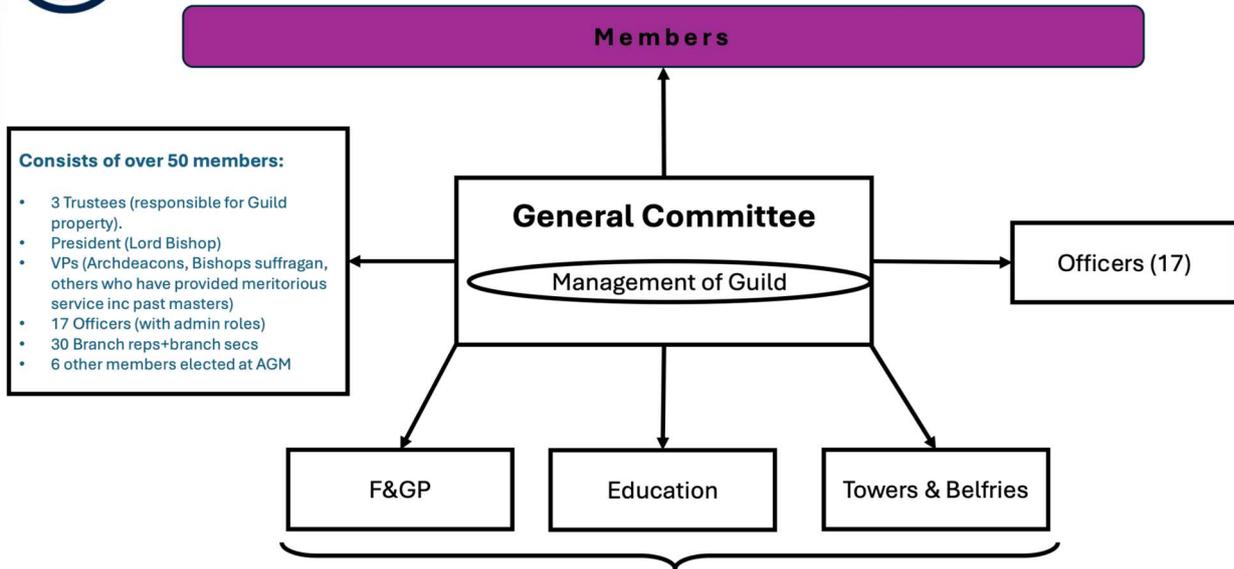
Changing the Guild structure is a big issue. If you have questions or would like more detail, please get in touch with your Branch Reps. The whole affair is to be put to all of us at the Guild AGM in May, and a positive vote of 75% or more required to carry. At the NOV GCM the General Committee voted to put this before the AGM with a 22 For, 1 Against, 8 Abstentions result. So it is expected to pass.

Figures 1 (top) and 2 (bottom) from the Guild showing the current and proposed structures.



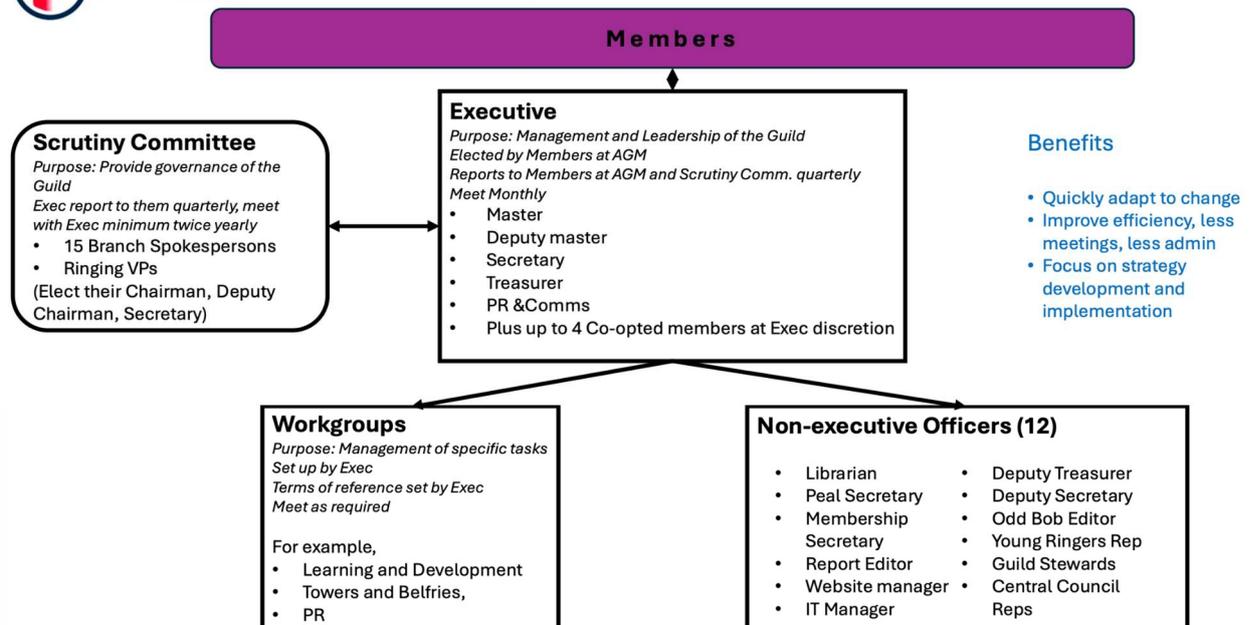
Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

Current Position



Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

Proposed Structure



There is a Guild Youth Band made up of young people from across the Guild, which often compete in national competitions. It was asked if youth bands could be part of Guild competitions. Several points were raised, particularly competition rules including whether the band must represent a tower or branch rather than an independent band. In the end, the deputy master will redraft the rules in time for review at the next general committee meeting.

A vote was held at the 2025 Guild AGM to lower its own quorum from 50 to 25. This did not pass.

Guild Posts

- The current Guild Librarian, Doug Beaumont, has been in post for many years. He has expressed his desire to step down over the past 2 years. Although a few people have expressed interest in the post - the size of the Guild Library (in excess of 7 book shelves) makes it difficult for many to provide the space to store the library. Therefore, the Guild is now looking to relocate items such as minute books to Oxfordshire History Centre (OHC). The published items in the library are unlikely to be taken by OHC. There are still big decisions to be made about what is retained and what is stored electronically and what goes to OHC. If you have an interest in participating in scanning historical documents or participating in rationalising the ODG library, please let your branch reps know.
- The new role of PR and Communications Officer has been filled by Lesley Belcher.
- Odd Bob Editor has been taken on by Kathryn Grant.
- The post of Deputy Web Master is being trailed by Peter who will start with a Reading Branch site update as a taster.
- As expected Honorary General Secretary Karen Pile stood down at the AGM. This role is widely acknowledged as a considerable undertaking and many thanks were given to her. She now continues assisting us by becoming one of the 5 Guild Stewards.
- Deviating from plans, the Master Katy Lane, agreed to stay on for another year.
- Rising up to the occasion, Heather Browning becomes the new Secretary to the Guild.

Other

- You may recall that the Oxford Diocesan Guild of bell ringers will turn 150 years old in 2031. The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers has approached ODG to host a Central Council AGM meeting. It may be the case that we will host this meeting in 2031 as part of our 150 year celebrations. Watch this space.
- We know. Not everyone has had a good experience with Member MoJo. The Guild is working with the Member MoJo organisation to make

improvements. Ideally we will all be able to pay our subs online next year. As this tool is new to the Guild, please be sure to pass on bugs and comments to the Guild.

- The Guild Safeguarding Officer reminds us that all ringers are required to complete Basic Awareness Training. Within a parish setting, it is the PCC and Incumbent who are responsible for implementation. Tower Captains and trainers should complete Foundation level and, if there are youngsters in the band, be DBS checked. It seems Basic Awareness once acquired does not require periodic renewal.
- Have you checked out the updated guild website? It can be found here: <http://odg.org.uk/>.
- Chris Mundy, Deputy Master, gave thanks on behalf of the committee to the South Oxon Branch for the efforts and success of hosting the 2025 Guild AGM at Warborough.

ODBF

The Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund. This is our Guild charity that helps out financially when one of our towers embarks on restoring or augmenting a ring of bells. The very same fund that our Branch level 100 Club contributes toward with a 50/50 split between donation and prize. In 2024 the ODBF, due to a most generous benefactor, received a large sum donation to plump up the coffers. This very welcome injection has magnified the holdings along the lines of a 25% increase giving great gusto to the assistance this fund can offer to towers going through those tricky times of renewal.

This being the case, for the past two years the Guild has opted for a £0 donation to the ODBF on the basis of it doing so well. It seems likely to vote the same way this year.

Guild 2026 Dates to Note:

- Saturday 28th March: Tower and Belfry Maintenance Course covering a wide range of the mechanical aspects of ringing. Testsworth, that is our branch, could hardly be closer.
- Saturday 11th April: Radley Course, for improving; Plain bob doubles, Grandsire doubles, Plain bob minor, Grandsire triples, Plain bob major.
- Saturday 16th May: Guild AGM and 8-bell Striking Competition. North Bucks Branch. This is the chance for all of us to have a say on Guild matters.
- Saturday 26th September: Michaelmas Course, Advanced practice day.
- Saturday 17th October: Another Tower and Belfry Maintenance Course. Venue TBC.

- Saturday 24th October: Steeple Aston Course, subject to demand, for improving; Plain bob doubles, Grandsire doubles or possibly triples or major.
- Saturday 7th November: 10-Bell Course, for improving on higher numbers. Shrivenham.

Treasurer's Report

Cathy Hughes D'Aeth

Receipts and expenditure for year ending 31st December 2025:

Receipts	£	Expenditure	£
Subscriptions	1070.00	Guild subscriptions	749.00
100 Club	680.00	100 Club prizes	340.00
Donations	239.50	Donation to ODG	14.00
Refund of uncashed 2024 cheques	26.00	Guild Bell Fund	606.50
Interest for 2025	12.17	Newsletter printing	48.00
		Meetings/miscellaneous	42.57
		Domain name retention	46.76
Total receipts	2027.67	Total expenditure	1846.83

Balance sheet as at 31st December 2025:

Brought forward (01.01.25)	£3322.45
Receipts	<u>£2027.67</u>
	£5350.12
Less expenditure	<u>£1846.83</u>
Carried forward (31.12.25)	<u>£3503.29</u>
Current Account balance	£2289.65
Deposit Account balance	<u>£1213.64</u>
Total funds held	<u>£3503.29</u>

Prepared by Catherine Hughes-D'Aeth, 1st January 2026.

Examined by Raymond Fergusson, 12th January 2026.

Subscriptions remained at £10 per member. At the year-end we had 107 paid up Branch members, 2 Honorary members and 5 members who gave a donation.

The 100 Club had 68 entries, generating £340 in prize money. We donated the remaining £340 to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund, plus a £150 donation from Branch funds and the £116.50 collection from the AGM service at Benson, giving a total of £606.50.

We paid £46.76 for the Branch website domain name renewal. Going forward, this is no longer needed and the Branch website will sit as a sub-domain of the main ODG site.

Overall, the Branch returned a surplus of £180.84 on the year's activities.

The new Branch Metro Bank current account is now up and running, after a few teething problems. From January 2026 there will be a £3 monthly charge. The deposit account remains with Santander.

My thanks to John Tchighianoff for running the 100 Club and Raymond Fergusson for examining the accounts. Also a huge thank you to Kay Bartholomew for acting as Branch Treasurer from 2015 to 2025. Your support over the year was much appreciated.

Website update

Benji Bateman

Our relaunched Branch website has now been live for over a year. During this time, I have uploaded the latest Look To each month and added new Branch events to the calendar as they are announced. Information on tower pages has also been updated in response to requests from tower captains. In addition, editing rights have been granted to two Branch Officers so they can make updates to their respective tower pages. If you would like access to edit your own tower page, please get in touch.

The Guild server has been very reliable over the past year, experiencing only minor downtime for upgrades and troubleshooting. As a result, we have retired our two legacy domains, <https://southoxonodg.co.uk/> and <https://southoxonodg.uk/>, saving approximately £50 per year in fees.

If you have any suggestions for additional features or improvements that would be useful on the website, or have any editing requests, please do let me know at [**webmaster@southoxon.odg.org.uk**](mailto:webmaster@southoxon.odg.org.uk)

Here is a reminder of our current website domain:

<https://southoxon.odg.org.uk/>

Tower Reports

Aston Rowant

Robert Newton

This has been an uneventful year for us. We have continued to ring for the 9 am service on most Sundays but only with the generous support of Julian and Andrew (Chinnor) and Chris, David and Sacha (Watlington). We are most grateful for their continuing support. We have a second D of E recruit and hope that both youngsters will maintain their interest. We have also been joined by Peter, an inexperienced ringer, who has moved to Postcombe from the Gloucester & Bristol Diocese. Alan Keen has refused to be beaten by his hip and has bravely joined us on a couple of occasions. Recently, we have been without the services of Paul Smith, who spent over two months in hospital but is now, thankfully, back home. We very much look forward to his return when he is stronger.

Practices continue to be well supported, largely by those mentioned above. Jenny Johns has retired to Dorset but Anita and a few members of the EBSB Branch are still regular attendees. We ring lots of call changes, plain hunting and Plain Bob Doubles and our limit continues to be Cambridge Minor. We have enjoyed and benefited from our twinning practices and hope that our visitors have also found them worthwhile. We have welcomed a couple of visiting bands of ringers, who seem to enjoy our bells. Unfortunately, there have been no quarter peal attempts, the muffles remained in their bag and the handbells did not see the light of day - or candle - during the year. Neither did we host tower tours in the summer. However, it is pleasing that our social events - Holy Week dinner and summer party - have continued.

Benson

John Tchighianoff

We were pleased to hold the Service and AGM in St Helen's Church in February and Josh Paul was re-elected to our tower at the AGM. We were also pleased to welcome ringers and provide refreshments for those taking part in the Guild 8 Bell Striking Competition in May.

In addition to Josh, Dave has also rejoined our tower and hopefully will be re-elected at the AGM. Robert has returned from Bath University to work at Harwell for a year as part of his PhD studies and we are grateful for his ringing ability that he brings to our band. On 10th April he conducted a quarter of Plain Bob Major in Benson to celebrate 10 years since his first ringing lesson here.

As we now have nine ringers this means we are often able to ring seven or eight on a Sunday which is much better than in recent years.

As in previous years we gave ringing demonstrations during the church's Heritage Open Day in September and there was a steady flow of visitors during

our two ringing sessions We also took part in the Christmas Tree Festival at the beginning of December. This year in addition to our usual display material Benji made some very impressive 3D models of wheels, clappers and stays to hang on the tree.

As always we are very grateful to all those who come and help out on our practice nights which enables us to ring things which we cannot normally do with our own band.

Berrick Salome

Andrew Davis

With the assistance of Wendy we have managed to ring on the first and third Sundays most months, often all six bells. Being out of the way, this year we will have some occasional ad hoc practice sessions. Details to follow.

Chalgrove

Andrew Davis

Practice nights have continued most weeks despite holidays, hospital visits and other commitments. Alison has achieved her first quarter, soon to ring another. Everyone in the team is making steady progress, before long we may even manage Little Bob again. On the third Wednesday of the month we join the team at Watlington for a good chat and experience on eight bells.

Sadly, we rarely ring all six bells on a Sunday, we are indebted to Gordon who makes the trip to join us most weeks.

After splicing many of the tails on our ropes, I ordered a new set from Ellis & Pritchard. Little did we know how long they'd take to arrive! After endless temporary repairs with electrical tape, finally after eight months they turned up. Over Christmas I fitted the new ropes, to be honest they are not as good as the previous set, the sallies appear lacking in body, time will tell on how long they last.

Dorchester

Nick Forman

Another good year! The quality of our ringing has improved significantly during the year and now all fourteen of our "qualified" ringers can ring Plain Hunt on five and seven bells. Judy, Emily and James are making good progress towards Learning the Ropes level 1 and are almost ready to graduate to service ringing.

William, Matt & Jane have passed LTR2 during the year and belatedly I have also passed Megan and Sarah at level two, though they have both been ringing above that level for some time.

The Bob Doubles course with the Watlington ringers was a big success at the start of November and helped many of us to improve our Bob Doubles ringing and to start working on ringing treble and tenor for Bob Doubles. There will be more courses in 2026!

We practiced on 45 Tuesdays (three fewer than last year) and 21 Foundation Skills practices using the simulator. The simulator practices help the newer ringers gain experience and I am grateful to the experienced ringers who come along to help with these practices. They really help to bring on the new ringers more quickly.

As last year, we rang for 58 Sunday services including nine Evensong services. There were no Sundays on which we were unable to raise a band for the 10:30 service but we were unable to raise a band for the July Evensong. Having set an objective to ring eight bells for as many services as possible we succeeded in ringing all eight bells for 41 services, which is 17 more than last year. The number of practices with eight or more ringers is down two on last year at 42. We rang for eight weddings at the Abbey this year and two in Warborough, up from three last year. There were a lot of funerals this year, including that of Alan Isherwood who rang with us for many years. In total there were 16 funerals at the Abbey and I think we tolled the tenor for about 12 of them, including Gillian's aunt who was 106.

Following on from the great success in 2024 (both for the ringers and the village) we rang out the old year and in the new year with nine ringers enjoying the evening together before ringing before and after midnight. Once again thanks go to Julia Sadler for making it all happen.

Twining with practices with Shabbington, Chinnor, Chalgrove and Watlington (not sure why there were four in the year?) were enjoyed by those who attended, though getting a blowout on the way to Chalgrove was not a highlight for me! There was one Branch Practice in Dorchester this year giving those of us who attended the chance to ring methods that are not possible on normal practice nights.

We continue to be part of the Oxon Ringing School and whilst the number of sessions was reducing as the number of learners was dropping there has been an increase in demand for handling sessions over the past couple of months.

As usual, my thanks go to all of you for your hard work, enthusiasm and for your continued improvement! Thanks also to Gillian (Secretary), Ian (Treasurer), Spike and William (Steeple Keepers). Thanks to David and Annie for their support teaching our new learners and in particular to David for deputising when I am not able to be at practice or service ringing. Also, thanks to Chris who retired as Steeple Keeper during the year

Drayton St. Leonard

Hilarie Rogers

Our practices continue twice a month, and we are grateful to Cathy and John, Japh and Catherine for their regular attendance. We have rung Wallflower, Pinks and Antelope singles to spice up our Grandsire and Plain Bob, and are just about to embark on Winchendon Place. At the end of the summer, Maggie began to learn and she joins Paula as our newest ringers.

Once again, both the Radley Course and the Bradfield Course held practical sessions on our bells, and we were pleased to welcome some other visiting ringers. Unusually for us, we rang for 3 weddings in 2025 – two at our church,

and one at Newington where we rang afterwards as the wedding party drove through Drayton on their way to the reception.

Great Haseley

John Hughes-D'Aeth

With no local ringers, we have continued to rely on "friends" to keep the bells ringing throughout 2025. My thanks to you all; you know who you are and we very much appreciate your support.

We rang for the Family Service on every first Sunday during the year, other than May and October when services were held "off site". We also rang on Easter Sunday and for the Carol Service.

We have continued to hold practices on the fourth Monday of each month, to which all who wish to develop their 6 bell ringing are most welcome. Our Surprise Minor repertoire on practice nights has expanded to include Wells, Surfleet, Ipswich, Carlisle and Chester, plus a range of methods in Spliced. In February we moved the practice to Great Milton; it was well attended, but the general consensus was not to repeat the experiment and to stick to 6 bells for the time being. We welcomed Hugh Deem's band for a quarter peal in March, again hosted a Bradfield Course module in August and (at short notice) opened our doors to the Branch Practice in October.

2025 saw the centenary of the recasting and rehangings of Great Haseley bells. On 12th May – 100 years to the day since the new treble and 3rd were recast by Gillett & Johnston of Croydon, in the presence of King George V and Queen Mary – we rang a quarter peal of Cambridge and Norwich Surprise Minor to mark the occasion. The band included Caroline Flockton, whose great uncle (Ernest John Lovell) paid for the recasting of the 3rd – the bell that bears his inscription. Caroline of course rang the 3rd in the quarter.

Shortly before Christmas, thanks to the generosity of Chris Ward of Benson, our ropes acquired a new fashion accessory. Each one now has a length of polythene tubing, which slots over the tail end and sally between ringing occasions with the aim of keeping the ropes dry. So far it seems to be working well, although we still don't quite understand the science behind it!

The local community very much appreciate our efforts and regularly tell us how much they enjoy hearing the bells. We intend to continue to put them to good use in 2026.

Great Milton

Cathy Hughes D'Aeth

Over the past year, I'm pleased to report that we have rung for eight of the 10.30 am Family Services on the third Sunday of each month. The ringing in October preceded the final service conducted by Revd Simon Cronk before his retirement as Rector of the Benefice.

In September we rang for the Thanksgiving Service for the life of Tony Jefferis, the Licensed Lay Minister at St Mary's. We were pleased to ring a quarter peal of Bristol S Major before the Carol Service in December.

We rang for one wedding and welcomed the Bradfield Course in August. The tower also hosted a Branch practice (in November) and Branch 8 bell practices on the second Friday of alternate months. This has helped to keep the tower from falling silent and I have regularly received thanks from the Churchwardens for ensuring that the bells continue to sound over Great Milton.

White's of Appleton came to carry out a biennial service on 30 June (they visited Great Haseley and Little Milton on the same day). Thankfully all three rings received a clean bill of health, with only minor observations on the condition of the bells and fittings. All being well, we will plan for them to come again in 2027.

Many thanks to all those who have supported the service ringing in 2025. If you are able to help on the third Sunday of each month (from 10:00 to 10:30 am), please contact me.

Little Milton

Cathy Hughes D'Aeth

We have continued to hold afternoon practices on the first and third Tuesday of each month. We also aim to ring for the Family Service on the second Sunday. This year we have rung for all these services plus Harvest, Remembrance Sunday (tolling), the School Christingle service and the Carol Service. We also rang to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day on 8th May.

At the beginning of September one of our stalwart ringers, former Tower Captain Raymond Fergusson, announced his decision to stop ringing. He still takes an active interest in what is happening in the tower. A small group of us joined Raymond for lunch in The Bull, Great Milton in November to thank him for his many years of loyal service.

A peal of 41 Spliced S Minor was rung by a visiting band on 19th December. It was dedicated as a farewell to Revd Simon Cronk on his retirement as Rector of the Benefice.

A huge thank you to our regular helpers; Chris Rogers, John Tchighianoff, Katie Lane and Stuart and Caroline Flockton. Without their ongoing support, our practices would no longer be viable.

Tetsworth

Andrew Davis

As previously reported in "Look To" following the tower working party, the bells are being rung again after many years silence. A service on thanksgiving was held in November, followed a couple of weeks later by ringing for the Christmas carol service. There were numerous positive comments from the villagers. With Tetsworth PCC, we have arranged a monthly practice night on the third Friday of the month from 7:30 pm. Service ringing will be the second

Sunday of the month from 10am. Do please let me know if you are able to help via the generic email address for Tetsworth. Tetsworth@southoxon.odg.org.uk

Warborough

Sue Dyke

Warborough bells have been fairly quiet during the past year. We have, however, been able to welcome some visiting bands during the year: Chalgrove & Henley ringers on their outing, and the annual Bradfield Course. Also, a Branch Practice and an 8-bell practice visited. With the help of the Dorchester ringers, we rang the bells for three weddings in 2025.

Warborough hosted the Oxford Diocesan Guild's Annual General Meeting. There was open ringing at the Church and also a Mobile Belfry sited on the Green which attracted many visitors and onlookers. Teas were provided in the Church Hall (my thanks to all who helped and provided cakes etc.).

The village enjoys the sound of the bells and I always receive positive comments following the ringing.

Once again, I would like to thank the Dorchester ringers for their unwavering support in 2025

A note from Catherine and John Hughes-D'Aeth:

We have found it an increasing struggle to raise bands for the United Benefice services at Great Haseley, Great Milton and Little Milton on the fourth and fifth Sundays of each month. With regret, we have decided that it is no longer viable to ring for these services. We will however continue to try and arrange ringing for the regular Family Services at each church, and for the major Church festivals.

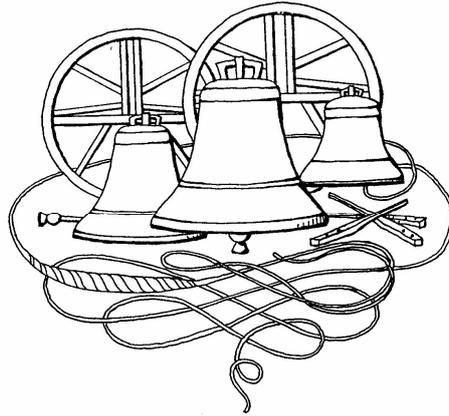
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2026 SODG Branch Practices

24th January	Chalgrove (6)
28th February	Shabbington - AGM (6)
28th March	Brightwell Baldwin (6)
25th April	Ewelme (6)
23rd May	Warborough (8)
27th June	Benson (8)
25th July	Chinnor (6)
22nd August	Tetsworth (6)
26th September	Thame (8)
24th October	Dorchester (8)
28th November	Little Milton (6)

All practices will run from 16.00 – 17.30.